

Prevention Pathways

Online Courses

Talking About Substance Abuse

Many therapists feel uncomfortable talking with patients about possible substance abuse. How you ask your questions is more important than what you ask. The letters in the word "PROBE" can help you remember ways to ask questions:

- P: Probe** for related information from the patient that may help you determine his or her risk for substance abuse.
- R: Rephrase** questions so that they are open-ended. Be sure that your questions don't suggest how they should be answered.
- O: Observe** behavior in addition to asking questions. People's behavior can provide you with clues to their risk for substance abuse.
- B: Be** matter-of-fact and routine as you screen. Be sure to avoid any hint of judgment in your questions.
- E: Everyone** should be screened. Inform participants that it is your practice to do so

<http://www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways>